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U.S. OKs panel on Iran; await Tehran approval—UN official

NEW YORK [UPI]—In a major step toward winning the release of the 50 American hostages in Iran, United Nations Secretary General Kurt Waldheim has completed the formation of a commission to look into Iran's grievances, a UN spokesman said Sunday.

The spokesman said the United States has accepted the members of the panel, but Waldheim still was awaiting a reply from Iran.

"The secretary general has finalized the composition of the inquiry commission and communicated it to the parties," the spokesman said. "He is now awaiting the reply of the parties."

He said the U.S. had already forwarded its reply. "It is positive—they have agreed," the spokesman said.

THERE WERE unconfirmed reports that one panelist—Abbu Sayeed Choudhury, the chief judge and first president of Bangladesh—who had been tentatively selected earlier in the week was dropped due to illness.

Diplomatic sources identified the five members of the commission as:

- Louis Edmond Petiti of France, an international law expert.

- Mohammed Bedjaoui, Algerian Ambassador to the UN.

- Adib Daoudi, foreign policy assistant to Syrian President Hafez al-Assad.

- Andres Aguilar of Venezuela, former Ambassador to Washington and former head of the human rights commission of the Organization of American States.

- Harry W. Jayewardene of Sri Lanka, a lawyer and noted expert in international law. He replaces Choudhury.

The appointment of the commission appeared to have been delayed because of difficulties in getting agreement on its members.

NOBEL PEACE Prize winner Sean MacBride of Ireland said in an interview published Sunday that Washington kept him off the commission because of

his past criticism of the CIA.

"The Americans objected to my presence on the commission," MacBride was quoted as telling the Italian news agency ANSA in an interview in Dublin.

The selection of the commission was seen by diplomatic observers as a major step toward resolving the 106-day hostage crisis. But there was no indication that other thorny questions had been resolved, including when the hostages might be released.

UN spokesman Rudolf Stajduhar cautioned earlier in the week that setting up the commission does not mean the intended package deal has been concluded, but he did say: "Once we have the commission we have come a long way."

"IT WILL BE a step forward, a good sign."

Carter administration officials repeatedly cautioned against over-optimism last week when it became apparent the commission was near completion.

The U.S. has pressed for the hostages to be freed upon the appointment of the commission.

But in an interview with Greek television Saturday, Iranian President Abolhassan Bani-Sadr said it will take more to gain the captives' freedom.

"As soon as the findings of the commission are released and the U.S. has fulfilled its commitments" on condemning its past policies in Iran, "the climate will have changed, and then we shall see what we shall do," Bani-Sadr said.

ASKED after a meeting of the Revolutionary Council Sunday night whether a

condemnation of the U.S. by the commission would win the hostages' freedom, Bani-Sadr said: "No, it wouldn't be sufficient in itself, but it would be a good thing."

He said the council did not discuss the commission or the hostages at Sunday's session.

In Paris, Iranian Foreign Minister Sadegh Ghotbzadeh said Saturday that two weeks would be "too soon" to expect the hostages to be freed.

Stajduhar last week said that after it is officially appointed, the commission would have to define its exact mandate with Waldheim and then could immediately leave for Tehran, where the 50 American hostages are being held at the U.S. Embassy by Moslem militants.

The panel is expected to complete its investigation of Iran's grievances about Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi in about two weeks and then submit a report to Waldheim, who is to inform the UN Security Council of the findings, it was explained.

UNIVERSITY of Kansas professor Norman Forer, leader of a private delegation seeking release of the hostages, said Sunday in Kansas City that there is no reason to feel optimistic about a quick end to the crisis. He said the hostages may not be freed for years.

Forer, who led the Committee for American-Iranian Crisis Resolution on a 10-day trip to Tehran, said the Moslem militants holding the U.S. Embassy told him the U.S. would have to confess to CIA intervention in Iran before a release would be negotiated.

"It could be years, depending on what happens in the States," Forer said at an airport news conference. "How long will the hostages be there? How long do people live?"